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THE ORIGIN AND TEACHING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS. IX

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AN OUTLINE BIBLE-STUDY COURSE OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

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STUDY VIII CHAPTER XIII

PLEAS OF CHURCH LEADERS FOR CHRISTIAN LOYALTY IN FACE OF TEMPTATIONS AND PERSECUTIONS. FIRST PETER, HEBREWS, JAMES, JUDE, SECOND PETER, AND REVELATION

First day.—§ 81. *The author, purpose, and general character of this group of books:* The First Epistle of Peter entire. Modern scholars are in great uncertainty as to the authorship of these writings. The names of Peter, Paul, James, and Judas (the two brothers of Jesus), and the apostle John have long been connected with them. Hebrews is really anonymous, the Revelation does not describe its author John, nor does James identify its author. First and Second Peter clearly claim to have been written by the apostle, but the actual authorship of these letters and of Jude is somewhat in doubt, that of Second Peter and Jude being especially so. The books evidently arose in an early period of the Christian church, but not at the very beginning. With the possible exception of James, they are all undoubtedly later than Paul.

It is evident, from the contents, that they were written in a time of grave danger to the church and all that it holds dear, to correct errors in the church, to fortify the members against temptation and persecution, and to insure a deeper faith in Christianity as the final and all-sufficient religion.

Read now, as a first example of this type of literature, I Pet. 1:1—3:12 (leaving 3:13 to end for the next day), carefully following the analysis given below. Note: (a) the circumstances under which Peter is said to have written (reading "Rome" for "Babylon"); (b) the various dangers and trials to which the friends were exposed; (c) the argument by which he seeks to comfort and encourage them; and, especially, (d) the splendid faith of the author, who seems himself already to have passed through similar crises, with honor. Do not fail to look up all the Old Testament passages which the author quotes as his authority.

Second day.—Read I Pet. 3:15—5:14, following the analysis and the suggestions given above. The remarkable passage in 3:19, 20 is based on the so-called Book of Enoch (60:5, 25-64; 69:26, in the edition of R. H. Charles).

ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

I. Introduction (1:1-12).

1. Salutation (1:1, 2).

2. Ascription of praise to God for the salvation brought through Christ, with special emphasis on the glory to be revealed (1:3-12).

II. The body of the letter; general exhortations (1:13-5:11).

1. To set their hope on this coming salvation and to live holy lives, as those redeemed by Christ's blood and begotten by the word of God (1:13-25).

2. To put away all wickedness and be built up a spiritual house as God's elect people (2:1-10).

3. To live righteously in all the relations of life, that thus criticism may be silenced and men may glorify God (2:11-3:12).

4. To live righteously even under persecution; enforced by the example of Christ (3:13-4:6).

5. To live soberly and in love in view of the nearness of the end (4:7-11).

6. To endure persecution for righteousness, but not to suffer as evil-doers (4:12-19).

7. To the elders, to care for the flock; to the younger, to be in subjection; to all, to live humbly and watchfully (5:1-11).

III. Conclusion; salutations, and benediction (5:12-14).

Third day.—§ 82. *The Epistle to the Hebrews.* Notice (Heb. 1:1) that the letter to the Hebrews begins without salutation, name of writer, or of persons addressed. In the oldest MSS the title of the letter is simply "To the Hebrews," without the name of Paul which stands at the head of the letter in our Bibles. Heb. 13:23 indicates that the writer was some friend of Timothy, but who he was is unknown. Read Heb. 3:6b-15; 4:14; 6:4-8; 10:23-39, and note the evidence they furnish that the letter was written when some had fallen away from faith in Christ, and for the purpose of preventing such apostasy among those to whom the letter was written. Look through the analysis below and see whether it sustains these statements.

ANALYSIS OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

I. Doctrinal portion of the letter (1:1-10:18).

1. Theme of the letter: revelation of God through Christ superior to all that preceded it (1:1-3).

2. Proof (1:4-10:18).

a) The Son better than angels (1:4-2:18).

b) Jesus our high priest superior to all that preceded (3:1-10:18).

(1) Better than Moses (3:1-6).

(2) Digression: exhortation to steadfastness (3:7-4:16).

(3) The priesthood of Christ real and legitimate (5:1-10).

(4) Digression second. Reproof of the readers for dulness, and warning of the fate of those who having made some progress fall away (5:11-6:20).

- (5) Christ a priest after the order of Melchizedek (chap. 7).
 - (i) Description of Melchizedek (7:1-3).
 - (ii) Superiority of his priesthood to that of Aaron shown in that Levi in the loins of Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (7:4-10).
 - (iii) The superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of Levi shown in that it displaces the Levitical, and is declared with an oath to be eternal (7:11-25).
 - (iv) The excellences of Christ's priesthood summed up (7:26-28).
 - (6) The priesthood of Christ is the real, the heavenly, of which the Levitical is only the shadow (8:1-10:18).
 - (i) This proposition emphatically asserted (8:1, 2).
 - (ii) Proof that it is heavenly, since he is a priest, yet is not of the earthly (Levitical) order (8:3-5).
 - (iii) This argument enforced by one concerning the covenants; while the old stood it was declared to be only temporary, to be displaced by another; of this new one Christ is the mediator (8:6-13).
 - (iv) The earthly and heavenly tabernacle and service are compared and shown to have the correspondence appropriate to their relation as type and antitype (9:1-22).
 - (v) The comparison of the two priesthoods made in detail, that of Christ being shown to be the permanent and real, the Levitical, the temporary, the copy, and the shadow (9:23-10:18).
- II. Hortatory portion of the letter (10:19-12:25).
- 1. Exhortation to steadfast faith (10:19-12:29).
 - a) Exhortation to steadfastness based on the nature of the salvation already described (10:19-25).
 - b) Enforced by the consequences of apostasy (10:26-31).
 - c) Enforced by appeal to their previous endurance (10:32-39).
 - d) Old Testament examples of faith (chap. 11).
 - e) Renewed exhortation enforced by appeal to these witnesses and to the example of Christ (12:1-3).
 - f) Enforced by the consideration that persecution is God's chastening of us as sons (12:4-13).
 - g) Further warning against apostasy, enforced by reference to Esau (12:14-17).
 - h) Further enforced by appeal to the difference between the old covenant and the new (12:18-29).
 - 2. More general exhortation, and final words (chap. 13).

Fourth day.—Read Heb. 1:1-3. Cf. the analysis and note what these verses imply (a) as to the writer's view of the Old Testament religion, (b) as to his conception of the relation of the new religion to the old. Read 1:4-14 (cf. analysis). Read 2:1-4. This is the first of a number of parenthetical exhortations in the letter and shows that though the letter has more of the form of a treatise than any other New Testament letter, yet its purpose is decidedly practical. Read also 2:5-18, noticing that the writer argues first that the Old Testament language

about Man and the Son of Man is perfectly fulfilled only in Jesus, and second, that the Old Testament represents Christ as speaking of men as his brethren.

Fifth day.—Read chaps. 3 and 4 with the help of the analysis. On 3:7-19 cf. suggestion on 2:1-4.

Sixth day.—Read 5:1-6:20 (cf. analysis).

Seventh day.—Read chap. 7 (cf. analysis).

Eighth day.—Read 8:1-9:22 (cf. analysis).

Ninth day.—Read 9:23-10:18 (cf. analysis). Review with the analysis the doctrinal portion of the letter, noticing how all the argument aims to show that while the Old Testament religion is from God, the New, which came in through Christ, is *better*, and how all the exhortation is to constancy and faith, and against apostasy. What does this imply as to the persons addressed? Were they of Jewish or gentile birth—were they Christians or persons whom the author desired to convert? To what danger were they exposed? What is the evident purpose of the whole?

Tenth day.—Read 10:19-11:40. Notice especially the relation of this familiar eleventh chapter to the argument and purpose of the whole letter (cf. analysis).

Eleventh day.—Read chaps. 12 and 13 (cf. analysis). Can you not feel the deep earnestness of the author as, with argument completed, he turns in passionate appeal to those who are tempted to leave the Christian faith for ways which can never lead to God? Whether or not we can today agree with all the author's arguments, we cannot but admire the devotion of men such as he to their religion and the energy and ability with which they defended it.

Twelfth day.—§ 83. *The Epistle of James.* The structure of this letter is very simple: just a succession of practical topics. Try to make an analysis for yourself. Make also a list of the dangers the author is trying to meet, and another list of the incentives which he so assuringly brings to bear upon those who may be weaker than himself in the Christian faith. How deep a religious life must such an author possess?

Thirteenth day.—§ 84. *The Epistle of Jude.* On the occasion and purpose of this letter see Jude, vss. 3, 4. See Acts 20:29, 30; Phil. 3:18, 19; II Tim. 3:1-13; 4:3, 4, for evidence that before the writing of this letter corrupting tendencies already existed in the church, and it had been foreseen that they would develop still further. Read Jude, vs. 4, again, noticing the particular character of the corruption which is referred to in this passage. Notice how the author masses his phrases of condemnation against the vile sins of sexual abuse, sodomy, greed, and the like! Vss. 12, 13 are evidently taken from the Book of Enoch.

Fourteenth day.—§ 85. *The Second Epistle of Peter.* Read chap. 2, comparing the letter of Jude and observing the evidence (a) that the writer of this letter feared that the corrupt men already at work among those to whom Jude wrote will presently be at work among those to whom he himself was now writing, (b) that the writer of Second Peter drew his description of the false teachers from the earlier letter. Read chap. 1 (cf. analysis), noticing especially in vss. 1-11 the strong emphasis upon the necessity of growth in knowledge and character, and in vss. 12-21 the substantial basis, historical and prophetic, upon which Christianity rests. Read 2:1-3:13, noticing the kind of skepticism here combated, and the practical bearing (vs. 11) of the counter teaching. Read 3:14-18, noticing the

emphasis upon steadfastness and growth in knowledge (cf. 1:5-8), and the suggestion of relation between them.

Fifteenth day.—§ 86. *The Book of Revelation.* Read chap. 1, and answer the following questions: (1) What is the general character of this book as compared with that of other New Testament books (vs. 1)? (Name the different classes of books contained in the New Testament and consider whether there are any others which belong to the same class with this.) (2) Who is the reputed author of the book? (3) From whom and how did he claim to have received its contents? (4) Where was he when he received it? (5) To whom was it addressed? (Consult a map respecting the places named in vs. 11.) (6) Who is referred to in vs. 12-19, and what conception of him does the vision represent?

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- I. Prologue (chap. 1).
 1. Title of the book (1:1-3).
 2. Salutation and doxology (1:4-8).
 3. The seer's vision of the giver of the Revelation (1:9-20).
- II. Messages to the seven churches (chaps. 2, 3).
 1. To the church in Ephesus (2:1-7).
 2. To the church in Smyrna (2:8-11).
 3. To the church in Pergamum (2:12-17).
 4. To the church in Thyatira (2:18-29).
 5. To the church in Sardis (3:1-6).
 6. To the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13).
 7. To the church in Laodicea (3:14-22).
- III. The seven seals (4:1-8:1).
 1. Prelude: the seer's vision of heaven (chaps. 4, 5).
 2. The opening of the first six seals (chap. 6).
 3. Episode: the sealing of the servants of God before the seventh seal is opened (chap. 7).
 4. The seventh seal opened. The signal for the seven trumpets (8:1).
- IV. The seven trumpets (8:2-14:20).
 1. Prelude to the sounding of the seven trumpets (8:2-5).
 2. The first four trumpets (chap. 8).
 3. The fifth and sixth trumpets: the first and second woes (chap. 9).
 4. Episode: prelude to the sounding of the seventh trumpet (10:1-11:14).
 5. The seventh trumpet: the third woe (11:15-14:20).
- V. The seven bowls of plagues (15:1-19:10).
 1. Prelude to the pouring-out of the seven bowls (chap. 15).
 2. The seven bowls poured out (chap. 16).
 3. Continued description of the seventh bowl: the fall of Babylon (17:1-19:10).
- VI. The victory of Christ (with 19:11 cf. 6:2) (19:11-22:5).
 1. The vision of the rider of the white horse (19:11-16).
 2. The feast of the birds of prey (19:17, 18).
 3. The overthrow of the powers of evil (19:19-21).
 4. The binding of Satan (20:1-3).

5. The millennium and the great judgment (20:4-15).
6. The new heaven and the new earth (21:1-8).
7. The vision of the bride, and of the new Jerusalem (21:9-22:5).

VII. Epilogue (22:6-21).

Sixteenth day.—Read chap. 2, studying in detail the four letters here given. Form as clear an idea as you can of the moral condition of these churches. What peculiar errors and dangers are here pointed out to them? Note the threats and promises to each. In plain language what do these statements mean? What ideal of the true church is implied in each case?

Seventeenth day.—Study the remaining three letters in chap. 3 in similar fashion, noting details as above.

Eighteenth day.—Read chap. 4 (cf. analysis), seeking rather to gain an impression of the heavenly worship of Jehovah set forth in this chapter, than to determine the significance of each group of beings or of the numbers, which are, of course, of symbolic rather than numerical significance. Read also chap. 5, and compare the worship offered to Jehovah in the previous chapter and that offered to Christ in this chapter.

Nineteenth day.—Read chap. 6 (cf. analysis). Read vss. 1 and 2 and cf. 19:11-16 as showing who is meant by "him that sitteth on the white horse." Notice that in chap. 6 he goes forth conquering and to conquer, but before his conquest is complete (cf. 19:16) some other things must happen. To see what these are read vss. 3-17. Some have thought that, interpreting the red horse to mean war, the black horse famine, and the pale horse death, the vision of the fifth seal martyrdom, and of the sixth seal the overthrow of Christ's enemies (cf. the words of Jesus, Matt. 24:6-13 and Luke 21:10-19), this chapter contains in brief the main thought of the whole book, viz., that though evil is a mighty force in the world, and though there must be conflict, persecution, and catastrophe before the end come, yet in the end Christ shall triumph over all and with him those that in faith endure to the end.

Twentieth day.—Read chap. 7 (cf. analysis). On the thought of the whole chapter, see Matt. 24:22, 31 concerning the protection and salvation of the elect amid all disasters.

Twenty-first day.—Read chap. 8 (cf. analysis). Notice that the seventh seal has no content of its own, but is only the signal for the seven trumpets and that the successive trumpets are the signals for successive disasters. Read also chap. 9 (cf. analysis). There have been many interpretations of this chapter, but what is most certain is that it describes some of the woes which the writer believed must befall the earth before the kingdom of heaven shall fully triumph.

Twenty-second day.—Read chap. 10 (cf. analysis), and notice that, as between the sixth and seventh seals an episode is introduced, so here between the sixth and seventh trumpets there is an episode of which this chapter is the first part. As to the meaning of this part of the episode recall the reference to the sealed book in chap. 5, and notice that it is now opened, and is given to the seer that sees the vision and that he is then bidden to prophesy. Read 11:1-13 (cf. analysis). Notice that, whatever else may be the meaning of this chapter, the thought so constantly presented in the Revelation appears here also, that though the enemies of God seem to triumph, in the end it is not so. Read 11:14-19 (cf. analysis),

observing that vs. 14 announces a third woe, but that the description of the woes does not follow immediately, but instead there is a proclamation of the full triumph of God's kingdom which is to follow those woes.

Twenty-third day.—Chaps. 12, 13, 14 are best understood as a description of the conflicts between the church (or the kingdom) and Satan, and of the full triumph of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of evil (cf. 12:9 and 20:2). With this in mind read chaps. 12 and 13.

Twenty-fourth day.—Read chap. 14, which sets forth especially the salvation of God's people and the overthrow of his enemies.

Twenty-fifth day.—Read chap. 15 (cf. analysis), noticing that while vs. 1 announces the seven plagues which constitute the third woe announced by the seventh angel (11:14, 15), just as the seven trumpets furnished the contents of the seventh seal (cf. 8:1), yet the actual pouring-out of the bowls is still delayed a little until once more the triumph of the people of God is announced (15:2-4). Read chap. 16, which in the seven plagues pictures the full judgment of God upon the wicked (cf. 15:1).

Twenty-sixth day.—Read chap. 17, a continuation of the description of the seventh plague. Babylon is undoubtedly a symbolic name suggested by Old Testament prophecy (Isa. 21:9, for example), and whether referring especially to Rome or Jerusalem it symbolizes the organized powers of the world, hostile to the kingdom of God.

Twenty-seventh day.—Read chap. 18 (cf. analysis). See suggestions for yesterday. Read 19:1-10 (cf. analysis).

Twenty-eighth day.—Read 19:11-20:3 (cf. analysis).

Twenty-ninth day.—Read 20:4-21:8 (cf. analysis).

Thirtieth day.—Read 21:9-22:21 (cf. analysis). Note how, in these last two chapters, the controlling thought of the book is emphasized by pictures of the perfect peace and happiness which succeed the long descriptions of dreadful conflict and carnage. Note also the solemn, final warnings and invitations such as the teaching of the book suggests, and the closing emphasis upon the importance of this revelation. Although time and experience have clearly proved that the oriental details of this "Revelation," like those so vividly portrayed in similar books such as "Daniel" and "Enoch," can by no means be regarded as authoritative for our religious thinking, yet must we, and Christians of all ages, regard with reverence the sacred convictions of these struggling heroes of an age long since passed. We must forever lay aside the spirit of hatred and vengeance which, in those days, was very naturally drawn out by merciless persecutions; but we are under still greater obligation to appreciate, both in thought and by daily living, all the abiding truths which these brethren discovered at so great cost, in the depths of their human experience, and to emulate the faith which in the darker hours still believes in the triumph of God's kingdom.